

# Glaucoma Facts for Community Organizations



## What should you know about glaucoma?

Community organizations play important roles in helping to improve the quality of life for members of their communities and they represent all segments of society, especially the underserved. As a community organizer, you are able to respond to the needs of your community members quickly and are a trusted source of information.

You can help to inform people in your community about who is at higher risk for vision loss from glaucoma. You are also positioned to distribute glaucoma and other important eye health messages, spread the word about the latest findings in eye health research, and tell your community members about the importance of maintaining good eye health.



## What is glaucoma?



Glaucoma is a group of diseases that can damage the eye's optic nerve and result in vision loss and blindness. The most common form is primary open-angle glaucoma, which is one of the main causes of blindness in the United States.

## How does glaucoma cause vision loss?

With glaucoma, the fluid within the eye drains too slowly, and, as the fluid builds up, the pressure inside the eye rises to a level that may damage the optic nerve. When the optic nerve is damaged, peripheral (or side) vision is affected, narrowing the field of vision. Left untreated, total vision loss can occur.

## What are the symptoms?

In the early stages of primary open-angle glaucoma, there are no symptoms. However, only 8 percent of people in the United States are aware of this fact. It's important for people to know that glaucoma can be detected early before noticeable vision loss occurs, and that vision that is lost cannot be restored. Although glaucoma cannot be cured, it can usually be controlled.

Vision loss can be prevented or minimized with early detection, treatment, and appropriate follow-up.

## What are the numbers?

Almost 3 million people ages 40 and older have glaucoma, yet only half know they have it. Even more alarming is that the number of people with glaucoma is projected to increase in the next few decades to more than 4 million by 2030 and more than 6 million by 2050.



**50%**  
**KNOW**

**50%**  
**DON'T KNOW**

## Who is at higher risk?

Anyone can get glaucoma, but some people are at higher risk. Those at higher risk for glaucoma include:

- African Americans over 40—It is still unknown why this specific population develops glaucoma earlier than others and is more likely to experience vision loss from it, so it is very important to reach them early.
- Everyone over 60, especially Hispanics/Latinos.
- People with a family history of the disease—If someone’s close family members had glaucoma, he or she is more likely to develop the disease.

## What educational resources are available?

The National Eye Health Education Program (NEHEP) has many resources to help you educate the members of your community about glaucoma. Here are a few:

**Keep Vision in Your Future: Glaucoma Toolkit**—A toolkit designed to help you increase awareness about glaucoma by conducting educational sessions in your community. It includes a PowerPoint presentation, speaker’s guide, participant handouts, and more.

**Glaucoma: What you should know** (available in **Spanish**)—A booklet for people diagnosed with glaucoma and their families and friends. It provides information about open-angle glaucoma and discusses the cause and symptoms of the disease, diagnosis, and types of treatment.

**Don’t Lose Sight of Glaucoma** (available in **Spanish**)—A fact sheet about glaucoma for people at higher risk. It answers questions about causes and symptoms and discusses diagnosis and types of treatment.

**Medicare Benefit Card** (available in **Spanish**)—A promotional card that describes the glaucoma and diabetic eye disease benefit under Medicare.

**Glaucoma Infographic** (available in **Spanish**)—A graphic that provides at-a-glance information on glaucoma, how many people have it, the lack of symptoms, who’s at higher risk, and what can be done to help prevent vision loss.

**Glaucoma Podcasts**—Interviews in which patients and eye care providers share their perspectives on glaucoma.



**Glaucoma Videos**—Two videos on glaucoma: one provides an animation of how glaucoma can damage the optic nerve, and the other features a doctor from the National Eye Institute explaining glaucoma and how to treat it.

**Glaucoma Education Web Page** (available in **Spanish**)—A consumer-friendly forum where people can learn important information about early detection, treatment, and follow-up care for glaucoma, as well as order educational materials.

**Glaucoma Public Service Announcements** (available in English and Spanish)—Announcements you can use in newsletters, local newspapers, websites, or social media outlets to raise awareness about who is at higher risk for glaucoma and why it's so important to get a comprehensive dilated eye exam.

For more information and ideas for glaucoma outreach in your community, visit [www.nei.nih.gov/nehep](http://www.nei.nih.gov/nehep).

## Social Media

In addition, you can find resources on our social media pages. Please also “follow” or “like” us:



**YouTube: /NEINIH**



**Facebook: /NationalEyeHealthEducationProgram**



**NEI Twitter: @NatEyeInstitute**

**NEHEP Twitter: @NEHEP**



**Pinterest: /neinih**

## Thank You

NEHEP would like to thank you for your outreach efforts in the community, and we look forward to working with you in helping to reduce vision loss from glaucoma.



National Eye Institute



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Education Program  
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